



Love Yourself Unconditionally

Lesson 1 (Transcript)

Okay. Welcome to Module 1, Lesson 1, The Middle Path.

And we'll jump right in to this lesson and I'd like to begin with a quote from St Teresa of Calcutta. She said, "To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it."

Here are a few questions to ponder and meditate on as we begin this lesson:

Are you struggling to balance the expectations of others with your own needs and desires? Do you consistently prioritize other people's needs over your own? Have you lost the motivation to pursue the things you once loved? Have you ever truly loved yourself? Have you fallen out of love with yourself?

If you have, you are not alone. And the good that you do for others may be in jeopardy if you don't keep your own lamp filled with oil.

It is significant that Mother Teresa says to keep a lamp burning we have to keep it filled with oil because Mother Teresa is probably one of the best-known symbols of a selfless person. A person who completely gave her life over to serving others and yet do she says that in order to keep a lamp burning, in order to keep doing the good work that she was doing in her life, she had to keep her own oil lamp filled.

So if Mother Teresa recognized the importance of self-care and self-love, then it is certainly true for all of us.

Society presents us with conflicting messages, and this is a challenge that many of us face today. On the one hand, self-love is being selfish. It is seen as self-indulgent. It is seen as just looking out for oneself. That's one idea that maybe some people get when they hear the word self-love.





Love Yourself Unconditionally

Lesson 1 (Transcript)

On the other hand, our culture tends to have this hyper focus on individualism. A focus on the self, on me, on my, on getting what I want. And in this course we will see that self-love, that true self-love is neither of these options.

There is, in fact, a middle path. And I'd like to use the example of the greatest commandment which is found in the Bible to underscore this middle path. The middle path, which allows us to acknowledge and reverence ourselves and others.

Jesus, who was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." And then he said the second is like it, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

And note that Jesus didn't say love your neighbor instead of yourself or love your neighbor after yourself. He said love your neighbor **as** yourself.

So that assumes that there is an underlying sense of goodwill and positive feelings toward oneself that you can use it as a model to then love others. So Jesus himself recognized the importance of truly loving oneself so that one can learn to love others well.

So it's neither either-or, but both-and. And this is the middle path that in this course we will seek to walk. Self love is the ability to walk this path, accepting all of who you are unconditionally.

Now the challenge about the middle path is that we learn to accept all the parts of ourselves, not just the parts that we like, but the parts that we struggle with. The parts that we find challenging.





Love Yourself Unconditionally

Lesson 1 (Transcript)

So when the greatest commandment says love your neighbor as yourself, that "self" that you're loving isn't just about the parts that you like, but all of you, so then you can love and accept all of what you may find in other people.

If you can look in the mirror, look at yourself, your body, your mind, your spirit. Accept all of it in love. This is what it means to love oneself unconditionally. The reason why that is so important is when we can really love and accept all of who we are, self-love then, allows us to accept others completely as well.

Another thing to be mindful of when we talk about self-love is that self love is not pampering or self-indulgence. It is the furthest thing from that. Self-love, you'll find that on this journey, the path to loving yourself, the middle path, is an arduous road, is an arduous journey, but is filled with reward for those willing to walk it.

It is a journey of self-discovery, of getting to know all of who you are. It is certainly not pampering, indulgence or selfishness. Because self-love is facing the worst part of ourselves and saying, "I love you."

So this is the reason why self-love is not pampering or self-indulgence. And accepting and condoning are not the same. So I think one of the objections when we hear this, you know, self-love is about facing the worst parts of ourselves and saying "I love you," it automatically means that we accept and condone anything about ourselves that may be harmful or morally wrong and that is just not the case. It is just about fully accepting what's there without any judgment. But it doesn't mean that we don't work towards improving the things that need to be improved.





Love Yourself Unconditionally

Lesson 1 (Transcript)

It is just fully accepting all of who we are. And the magic happens in the acceptance because, self-love and acceptance are foundations of self-improvement. They are the very foundation upon which we then improve ourselves. We must start with acceptance.

This is often the missing piece in many personal development trainings and so. Oh, we want to lose 50 pounds. Okay great. That's wonderful but in order to begin the journey, we have to be able to look at ourselves in the mirror, 50 pounds overweight and fully accept who we are, fully love who we are.

That doesn't mean that you will stay that way, it means that you accept yourself fully. You see what needs to be worked on and you could make choices now. You could say, you know, I love myself as I am, and I also know that I'll be a much healthier person if I can lose fifty pounds.

So it's very important to understand, self-love and acceptance as the foundation for improving and growing, not as a way to justify anything that is wrong or as a way of staying stuck.

It's also true for emotional things. If I struggle impatient or being angry, I can look at myself and fully expect that I am an impatient person. But it doesn't mean that I am condoning that or saying, "Yea it's okay that I'm impatient because I love myself." No it is saying, "Oh I see that. I see that part of me and I fully accept it." So now I am able to make some choices to change that behavior because I would like to be more loving toward other people.





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Lesson 1 (Transcript)

Committing to loving oneself completely involves suffering. So as you're beginning to see this is no picnic, this is no pampering. So our willingness to engage, to walk the middle path, necessarily means that we will have to face our suffering, because we're talking about facing everything, all of it. The good, the not so good, the bad.

We must be willing to confront our emotional and spiritual pain by facing our past histories rather than avoiding them through self-denial or self-indulgence. This is the middle path. So part of the journey of walking the middle path is facing our past histories, facing the things that we've struggled with, the things that may have contributed to us not loving ourselves as well as we could.

We'll explore the role of suffering in our next lesson and we'll also explore some of these past histories that may have led us to not love ourselves as well as we could.

But in the meantime, I'd like you to ponder these questions. In the lesson you will have a printable worksheet that you can print off and actually write your reflections or answers as you think of these questions. And don't think of this as you having to come up with the right answer. Just reflect on these questions and you can write down what comes to mind.

So the first question is, what do you like most about yourself? And please, don't hold back here. Put everything down even the smallest things that you have noticed about yourself.

What do you dislike most about yourself? Again, just writing everything down that comes to mind. And you may have an easier time doing this than writing the things that you like most. I think we tend to focus on the negative part of ourselves and that more readily comes to mind. And of course in this course will try to correct that. That when you're asked this question again that you can very very easily write all the things that you like about yourself. Fill pages and pages.





Love Yourself Unconditionally

Lesson 1 (Transcript)

The next question is, how have others complimented you in the past? And again recall everything that you can think of, even a small compliment. If you give a presentation at work and someone said, "Good job." Or if someone complimented you for being a good listener or good friend. Maybe someone complimented you for being a thoughtful and generous person. You may not think anything of it because it's something that comes naturally to you, so you may have discounted these compliments.

Just go back in your mind and think about what some of these compliments have been and what are some consistent compliment you've received from various people over time.

And then, four, how do you react when you receive a compliment? Do you brush it off. Do you say, "Aww it's nothing," or do you fully accept, fully welcome compliments? So again, you can print the work sheet and write down your responses to these questions and in the next less we'll talk about the role of suffering on our journey to greater self-love.

